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SUBJECT: CODEL PELOSI DISCUSSES CIV-NUKE AND OTHER ISSUES
WITH INDIAN MPS

11. (U) Summary: On March 20 Speaker Pelosi and her delegation, and Ambassador Mulford and the DCM, held discussions with Indian Members of Parliament (MP) from across the political spectrum. The civil nuclear initiative dominated the 45 minute meeting but Tibet, Burma and the Doha trade talks were also mentioned. During the friendly conversation the MPs in favor of the deal asked that US officials speak with one voice, while those against explained their opposition. Though the forum did not break new ground on Civ-Nuke, Ambassador Mulford reiterated for the MPs who were unclear that the US and allies such as the UK and France consider a minority or caretaker government to have sufficient standing to complete the deal. Not intended as a session to "convert" MPs who oppose the deal, the meeting successfully brought together top-level legislators from the world's oldest and largest democracies and ended with mutual pledges of friendship and cooperation. End Summary.

Initial Question on Tibet

12. (U) After an exchange of pleasantries and comments from both sides about the strong growth of the Indo-US relationship, Nationalist Congress Party MP Robert Kharshiing (Meghalaya) asked about the CODEL's view of the situation in Tibet. Speaker Pelosi first thanked India for its hospitality in providing sanctuary to the Dalai Lama and remarked that the CODEL would be traveling to Dharamsala the next day (septel). She stressed that the Dalai Lama has always been in favor of autonomy, not independence for Tibet. A good resolution would be achieved in Tibet, the Speaker hoped, due to the intense international focus now on the region.

Civ-Nuke Dominates Discussion

13. (U) Congressman McDermott then turned the discussion to the civil nuclear initiative. Congress Party MP and spokesman Dr. Abhishek Manu Singhvi (Rajasthan) led off stating that the UPA clearly wants the deal but noted that it is not helpful when different US officials make differing statements about the Hyde Act. He also said that some comments from US officials sound like "deadlines," which only

provokes further opposition. Speaker Pelosi affirmed to the MPs that the Hyde Act does not have a timetable nor was the CODEL delivering a timetable.

¶4. (U) Chandan Mitra, editor of the right-wing daily newspaper Pioneer, told the CODEL that the opposition's misgivings are not with the 123 Agreement, but with the Hyde Act. The Hyde Act is seen as restrictive, he said, and against India's interests because it has provisions which intrude on India's sovereignty. With these misgivings, he was not sure the infringement of sovereignty was worth it, given that nuclear power would only account for seven percent of India's energy by 2020.

¶5. (U) Application and enforcement of the Hyde Act versus the 123 Agreement generated many questions from the MPs. Samajwadi Party MP Shadid Siddiqui (Uttar Pradesh) distilled many of the comments when he asked, "Does the Hyde Act prevail on GOI?" Congressman Sensenbrenner responded frankly, "I can't give you a flat answer on that."

¶6. (U) All India Trinamool Congress Party MP Dinesh Trivedi (West Bengal) got to the political heart of the matter when he said, "The only question is does the UPA government want to survive for a few more weeks." He then asked if the US would sign the deal with a minority government. Ambassador Mulford responded that a minority or caretaker could enter into the deal and that US allies such as the UK and France agree.

Doha Round Trade Talks

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¶7. (U) To a question about completion of the Doha Round of trade talks, Congressman Sensenbrenner responded that there would not likely be a vote in the US Congress before the presidential election. Speaker Pelosi further explained to the MPs that "free trade" currently garners little support in certain regions of the US, and that until the US economy rebounds, any new trade deals will be difficult to pass.

Burma

¶8. (U) Finally, the CODEL was asked for its views on Burma and pro-democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi. Speaker Pelosi told the MPs that the US was looking for guidance from India and commented that, "Maybe you could do more."

Deepening Ties Regardless of Civ-Nuke

¶9. (U) Comment: Both sides appreciated the frank and open discussion. Battle lines have hardened in India on the nuclear initiative and the exchange of views was not intended to persuade MPs opposed to the deal to convert. Congress Party leaders will decide its fate. But the meeting of top-level legislators succeeded by strengthening the government to government linkages between the world's oldest and largest democracies. End Comment.
MULFORD